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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT Position of Labor in Czechoslovakia

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1. Labor in Czechoslovakia expected nothing good whatever out of the currency revaluation. There was severe disappointment over the general worsening of the standard of living. It is true that it was accompanied by the abolition of ration cards, but only bread remained so cheap that it could be bought by every laborer. Bread remains at the fixed price of 2.80 kronen per kilo. Fats, butter and bacon, which were off the market before the stabilization, are now available, but prices on them are going up almost daily. While the cards were in force a small amount could be bought, but it is hardly possible any longer. Current prices are 85 per kilo for bacon, 80 per kilo for fats, 35 to 40 per kilo for meat, 50 per kilo for butter, but these prices cannot be kept stable and are advancing.
2. For comparison, a second class worker in the building industry gets 700 to 800 kronen a month, while a first class worker gets about 1,000. Deductions for sickness insurance, unemployment insurance and so on amount to about 300 kronen a month. A room in one of the industrial cities costs 170 to 180 kronen a month, and as a result many of the workers must live together.
3. Eating in the shop cafeterias is proportionally cheap. In most factories it comes to about 10 kronen a day; 2 for breakfast, 5 for either of the other two meals. But as these meals are both scanty and poor, it costs at least another 10 kronen a day to eat. When it is considered that Sunday meals must be paid for also, about 350 kronen a month are necessary for food. This leaves practically nothing for other needs to the average worker.
4. Specially skilled workers and miners get at most 1,200 kronen a month, if they work on two of the Sundays.

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5. There is a small allowance for children, but it is so insufficient that the women and older children also have to work. There are certain industries in which the position is still worse. A builder's helper, for instance, can only make 0.90 kronen an hour in a poor place, and thus must work three hours for a kilo of bread, or 40 hours for a kilo of meat. This is one of the reasons why few are willing to work in such an industry.
6. A midday meal in a state restaurant costs 15 kronen, or 20 kronen if one wishes a better meal. In the "people's buffets" a thin soup costs 1 to 2 kronen, a portion of vegetables, 3 kronen and a fish, 5 kronen. A worker can afford such a luxury only rarely. In the summer it is possible to buy vegetables to piece out the bad factory cafeteria meals.
7. Since the stabilization, industrial products have gone up by 10 to 20 percent. An overcoat cost 1,400 to 1,500 kronen. Cheap shoes from Zlin cost 130 to 150 kronen, and hold together only a couple of months. Better shoes go up to 400 kronen, and a really good overcoat comes to as much as 3,000. The ordinary worker cannot dream of such a thing. There are many textiles on the market but money to buy them is wanting. There are no longer any special markets where articles can be bought for foreign exchange or gold.
8. All businesses down to the smallest barbershops and taverns have been nationalized.
9. Politics hardly interests the workers any longer. Except for the death of Stalin and the fall of Beria, nobody talks about politics. The hard living conditions occupy the whole attention of the workers, and the number of genuine Communists decreases from day to day. In 1948 about 30 percent of the workers were Communists by conviction. Today the number cannot be more than 8 or 10 percent and in the building industry it is down to 3 percent.
10. The industrial center of Pilsen is no longer a Communist stronghold. The largest percentage of Communists is in the Sudeten area, which was colonized by the Communists, especially in the mines. The strongest anti-Communist area is Slovakia, where the people hold together tightly. Anti-Czech feeling there is on the increase, and develops against the Communist officials, functionaries and officers.
11. The political "education" of labor reached its maximum in 1948. Since 1950 the political hours lost their appeal and since Stalin's death they are no longer held in many places. Not even the inscribed Party members take part in the rallies in many cases. These Communists have in effect become Titoists, since they are persuaded that the Soviets and the current Czechoslovak leadership have betrayed the Communist ideal. The authorities are aware of this and it causes them anxiety, but they do not know how to combat it.
12. Stalin's pictures still hang in the old places. There are few pictures of Malenkov to be seen. The names of the other Soviet Party leaders are hardly known and their pictures are nowhere to be seen.
13. Subscription to the Communist journals is not compulsory, but advisable if one is to keep up with things. The heads of the state undertakings are without exception Communists by necessity.
14. Travel is unlimited in the country and papers are only seldom examined on trains. Travel is expensive, 0.20 kronen a kilometer.

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773.11	27M
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781.12	27M